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~ Cyberattack Simulation ~ People Are Talking!   ~ Spying on Students!
~ Global Net Neutrality! ~ High Speed for Masses! ~ Cyber-Jihad Threat!
~ Atari's New Star Trek! ~ Google Buzz Complaint! ~ Atari Party in Mach!

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                    -* Botnets in Government Systems *-
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                -* Join the Vintage Digital Music Revolution! *-



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->From the Editor's Keyboard   "Saying it like it is!"
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""

Our luck held for a few weeks, but we finally got some payback this week
with a fresh blanket of 7 inches of snow. Hey, it's New England - this
stuff happens here. On the plus side, the temps have been in the upper
30's and lower 40's, so the stuff is disappearing rapidly. Unlike what's
happening to our brethren down in the mid-Atlantic areas!

A story that appears in this week's issue really struck a nerve with me.
Imagine this... A high school - a good one, mind you - gives all of its
students laptop computers for school work. What a great gesture, and I
applaud things like this for schools to do.

Now, imagine yourself, as a parent, getting a phone call from the school.
The principal tells you that your child has been acting inappropriately.
As a parent, I'm sure that this is something that you'd appreciate hearing
about. Oh, did we neglect to mention that this inappropriate behavior
was found to have occurred at home?!

You see (wait for it!), these laptops all have webcams included. Nothing
strange about that, you say. The systems are also equipped with a security
feature to aid in locating the machine should it become lost or stolen.
Again, nothing too strange here. However, that security feature can be
activated at any time - it turns the webcams on and can see everything.
Seems like school officials activated these systems to spy on their
students, and catching some in embarrassing situations!

Can you imagine learning about something like this?? Schools have absolutely
no right to know what a student is doing outside of school (barring the fact
that it may be a school-sponsored activity), and especially what a student
does at home. Once a student leaves the school for the day, he's no longer
"a student", but a private citizen. It's an incredible breach of privacy!
How ironic that many students had recently finished reading George Orwell's
"1984"!! Big Brother, indeed!

So, if your child had a school-sponsored computer for home use, with a
webcam installed, you may want to place some tape over it when it's not
being used, just in case! I hope that the families of some of these
students sue the school system for this totally unethical violation of
privacy!

Until next time...

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                 Join the Vintage Digital Music Revolution!
                      Feature Your Music on AMN

The Atari Music Network is inviting you to join the Vintage Digital Music
Revolution! If you're an 8-bit chip musician or vintage MIDI synthesist,
you can promote your music here for FREE with a professionally designed
profile page! This is your chance to get your music noticed as AMN embarks
on a mass marketing campaign to various e-zines, record labels, concert
promoters, blogs and websites. So bust out those 0s and 1s and get your
Atari inspired music into the spotlight - this could be your big break!

Visit this link for more information:
http://www.atarimusic.net/index.php/component/content/article/37-fp-r...

(MAIN SITE) http://www.atarimusic.net

                          Atari Party
                       Davis, California
                         March 14th

Hi comp.sys.atari.st folks! For anyone near Sacramento, California
(or SF Bay Area, and willing to drive one or two hours), we'll have
at least one Atari ST at the following event...

Atari video game aficionados from near and far will host the second
annual Atari Party in Davis, California on Sunday, March 14th.

Atari Party invites the whole family to a day of games, prizes, and
even a little bit of learning. Test your skill with 300 video games on
30 game systems dating as far back as 1975, plus get a chance to win
prizes in a free raffle, learn about the golden age of Atari with a
screening of the documentary film "Once Upon Atari", and experience
the first major motion picture to extensively use computer graphics
with a screening of the 1982 Disney film, "Tron."

Admission is free and children are welcome. Raffle prizes include
retro-style USB joysticks from Legacy Engineering, books from O'Reilly
Media, gift certificates for ThinkGeek.com, and classic Atari computer
systems.

Atari Party is March 14th from 12pm to 8pm at the
Redwood Park Community Building, 1001 Anderson Road in Davis, California.

For more information, visit
http://www.newbreedsoftware.com/atariparty/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Well, I neglected to mention it last week, but the Olympics are in full swing right now. I still love the old tried and true events like downhill and slalom skiing, but I've got to admit that I'm transfixed by the snowboarding events... while most of the moves and "tricks" seem like recklessness to me, I've got to admit that they must take a huge amount of physical strength and coordination and skill.

While watching the gymnastics of the summer games has always left me speechless (quite a feat in itself), snowboarding leaves me even more so. I've never set foot on a snowboard, so I can't say for sure, but I'm guessing that there's nothing closer to flying than that. That's what I used to say about the ring and uneven parallel bar competitions in gymnastics... the grace and agility and sheer control needed to make these things look so graceful... to even make them possible... leaves me in awe. And while snowboarding isn't quite the same, the sheer physical strength and control that must be needed leaves me watching and mouthing the words, "That's just so cool!"

And there are, of course, the media darlings of the Olympics too. I'm guessing that each country has them, but here in the United States, the ones getting press seem to be Lindsey Vonn and Shaun White.

Vonn is the skier that announced just before the Olympics that she'd sprained her shin or ankle or something... jeez, this is one accident-prone young lady. What amazes me is that, no matter what it is, she's out there practicing or exercising whatever injury it happens to be instead of backing off and letting it get the best of her.

Shaun White has got to be the nickname king of this Olympics, being known as the Flying Tomato, Red Zeppelin, and Animal among other things... He's exactly the kind of show-off punk kid I hate...

Except that you can't hate this guy! He's just so... him. He loves what he's doing and he's blessed enough with the talent to be good at it. You just cannot watch him snowboarding and not say "wow!" or "Oh cool!" or even "I'll be damned!" and smiling at the sheer talent and grace required. AND he seems to actually be a nice guy too. Oh well, I guess I can let ONE slip by, right? [grin]

On a somber note, this Olympics has been touched by sadness too. Nodar Kumaritashvili, Georgian luger (pronounced "loo-jer", not like the handgun manufacturer), died when he slammed into a beam after leaving the track during a training run. Some international committee 'decided' that the accident was his fault, and not that of the track or its designers... I have no idea how they came to that conclusion or how valid it is, so I'm not going to say anything rude about them, but 'cmon, the guy DIED... and not in an easy way either. He slammed into that beam at a high rate of speed (estimated at 89 miles/143 kilometers per hour) and died shortly thereafter.

89 miles an hour?? I'm sorry, but there is no way you'd ever get me to travel at 89 miles an hour, on my back, inches from an ice-covered track.. I don't even like WALKING on ice!

It was a terrible, terrible accident, but what bothers me even more than the controversy over why it happened (its a 'fast' track, with top speed clocked at 95 miles an hour, and some say that THAT was the cause of the accident, not a mistake on Kumaritashvili's part) is the fact that network television showed the crash over and over... Come on, execs; put your foot down and say, "No, that's not right... stop the playback before the impact". It sickened me the first time I saw it, and it only got worse each time I saw it after that. If people (viewers and network execs both) want bloodsport, let's just bring back gladiators and dog fights.

Well, let's get to the news, hints, tips and info available from the UseNet, shall we?

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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'Zorro' posts this about zWeather:

"Thanks to MiKRO, zWeather 1.2 is available. No new features but a couple of bugs have been fixed and, the most important, now zWeather should get again the datas from weather.com."

'Falcon060' asks Zorro:

"This is great news!!! But when I tried it it does not seem to load. I have put the Gemsys folder on C drive and let it replace the files. Just to let you know the old zwether was only about 248,000 bytes and this new one was 545000 bytes is that correct? If that is not correct then I may have to dig out my old CD's and get LZH unpacker rather than using the PC to unpack the archive and moving it over by floppy. Any thoughts on this one?"

MiKRO of Mystic Bytes tells Falcon060:

"Yes, this is it, no need to do anything more (than putting the Gemsys folder on drive C). What do you mean "does not seem to load" ? It hangs? Return to desktop? What environment / desktop? Loading time with this version is quite long, esp. on 030 machines, it has to load and depack ~50 PNG icons. If you can, test it in aranym with network, it should works out of the box. And remember, all Zorro's code is compiled for 030+ and (!) FPU.

Yes, the size is correct. All code (incl. libraries) was recompiled with gcc4 (it produces a little bit bigger binaries in aggressive optimization modes) plus libxml was updated to the latest version (possible code increase). zWeather binary itself is stripped and upx-ed, so the smallest possible size is achieved."

Falcon060 replies:

"It does not seem to be loading. I am running the latest Magic (6.2 I believe) with Jinnee 2.5 desktop. I am using this on a CT60'ed Falcon running at 95 mhz. It would seem load time would not be that long. A couple of other things noticed, Whenever I open one of my partitions (Hard Drive or CD drive) when I try to move the window it just moves a

like an 1/8 of an inch then you have to re-grab the window to move it
just another 1/8 of an inch. So you can see that would become very
annoying. When I hit CONTROL-ALT-ESCAPE to bring up the processes
running I notice that zweather is running but is taking up tremendous
amounts of ram. I have 512 mb of RAM and it seems to be taking up
most of that. Not sure why. I will look into the CT60 memory usage
CPX and see what it reports as used and free ram.

Again this should not be a problem for a 060 running at 95 mhz and
built in FPU and PMMU.

OK it seems that maybe I have everything right. But will have to play
around with it some more and see what I can get it to do. In the mean
time let me know if you have any questions or comments on what could
be causing this. I am using an EtherNEC with the 68060 driver from
Didier, or at least the CT60 package.

Apparently I had a corrupt file when transferring from my PC to my
Falcon060. So I have to test my 3.5 inch floppy to find out which is
defective. I ended up downloading all HIGHWIRE, Zweather and
MagicXNet files I needed and burnt them to a CD and all was well.
Zweather works once again!!!! It is great to have this little piece
of wonderful software working once again!!!"

Jo Even Skarstein asks:

"Wouldn't it be possible to cache the converted icons instead of
converting them each time the application is started?"

Falcon060 agrees:

"I wondered the same thing. But, if your running a CT60 at 90+ mhz.
I doubt it takes very long. Once I am at my desktop, it is less than
5 seconds and Zweather is up and running. But I could see where
slower atari computers would be an issue. By the way, how are you
doing? Not sure if you remember me? I was the one that gave you all
the MagicXNet files I believe to look at and see if we could figure
something out for the EtherNAT."

MiKRO replies:

"Ah, glad to see you have sorted it out. It's true I haven't tested it
on MagiC but it would be very strange if it didn't work.

About the loading time: in Zorro's latest sources you can find very
similar thing -- all images are bundled in one PNG and stored as MFDB
(Atari native) format internally. But hard to say anything about
release date, it's up to him or anyone else who is going to continue
the development (https://sourceforge.net/projects/z-tools)"

Falcon060 tells MiKRO:

"Maybe sometime this year I will take a look at the sources and try
doing some compiling of my own. Then figure out the PNG loading
process and see if there is a better way or not. But honestly, it
only takes less than 5 seconds from the time the desktop appears till

Zweather is up and running. Not sure that it has any benefit other
than for much slower computers with not much ram. Even a Falcon030
stock with 14 mb of Ram should do ok at loading this in at bootup
time. Anyone have any thoughts on this? Does anyone actually run
Zweather on a stock Atari computer. If so, what are your OS, system
specs and how long does it take to bring Zweather up and running?
Would really tell me if its worth the time to take on a project like
this."

Ben Smith asks about hard drive capacities:

"What is the maximum capacity for SCSI-2 ST Hard Drives Running with ICD
Pro, Link Host or ADSCSI Plus and TOS v.1.2! I'm not interested in
switching away from ICD PRO Host Software! What Determines if a SCSI Hard
Drive has too much capacity? I use a Seagate Fast SCSI 2 ST11200N Hard
Drives!"

Dave Wade tells Ben:

"If you insist on sticking with ICD Pro then you are stuck with its
limitations. As an IT Pro I see so many tender documents which specify a
particular version of software and then ask for work arounds for its
limitations. WHY CHOOSE IT IF IT DOES NOT DO WHAT YOU WANT!
I have a pile of Seagate SCSI drives that will only format on my TT-030
with HDDRIVER. The time its saved me has more than covered the cost of
purchase. So whilst it doesn't get round all problems it does allow me to
use a load of drives that I can't get working with any other program. Its
actively supported so if you do have a problem you can e-mail the author
(unlike hi -wire!) and get a response."

Ben tells Dave:

"I'm Happy with it's limitations, I just need to know which drives I can
use with the ICD Pro? What determines that? Is it capacity?

It does do what I want! I need to know which Drives I can use with it!
What parameters? Is their a maximum capacity?

I have HDDRIVER and I will not use it! I like ICD Pro!"

Jo Even Skarstein adds:

"Any SCSI-drive where parity can be disabled by a jumper. Size doesn't
matter, but there might be some limitation the SCSI-adapter. It's quite
likely that you can't access sectors beyond 1Gb with these adapters."

'PP' adds:

"It is not clear what adapters can access over 1GB on ICD site:
http://www.icd.com/atari/index.html#adscsiplus

You need to Google little around to get proper answer. TOS 1.02 has
limits: 256MB max partition size and max 14 partitions. So, it is 7GB.
That is more than enough for all SW you can imagine... Too much capacity?
It will not prevent any adapter to access first 1GB on drive.

So, answer is: there is no maximum capacity in fact (limits are far
beyond than current manufactured consumer drives, not to mention older
ones, what are only interesting). You may have only maximum accessible
size on disks, that is usually 1GB with Atari ST ACSI/SCSI adapters.

In any case, you may try, and will see .... (if can not find what ICD
model can accessing over 1GB) .

Another option is (only if can over 1GB) to use DOS partitioning -
then may have partitions of max. 2GB. However, it is not recommended -
you need program BigDOS then, what is not compatible with all Atari
SW, and I remember that there were some problems with it on TOS 1.02 ,
while under 1.04 and 2.06 worked good.

Really don't see the point with such large partitions when SW needs not
so much space. Only maybe recommended if want to attach same disk
sometimes on PC, for data transfer. But even then, there are some better
drivers, which have TOS/DOS compatible partitions."

Well folks, that's about it for this week. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Atari Beams Up New Star Trek Game!
  """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Nintendo Wins Game-Copying Suit!
                                      Old Nintendo Sells for $13,000!
                                      And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News   - The Latest Gaming News!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                Atari Beams Up with New Star Trek Online Game

Hollywood director J.J. Abrams has gone where man has gone before, with his
2009 "Star Trek" movie blasting the sci-fi franchise back into the spotlight
and online, uniting new and older generation fans.

Videogame publisher Atari and developer Cryptic Studios hope to
capitalize on the $385 million global box office that the Paramount
Pictures movie raked in last year with the first massively multiplayer
online (MMO) game set in Gene Roddenberry's science fiction universe
that dates back to 1966.

"Star Trek Online" was recently released for PCs, allowing fans from the original TV series as well as the moviegoers who enjoyed Abrams' reboot, to create a virtual character and explore space, the final frontier.

"I think this game has an opportunity to unify the 'Star Trek' fans, many of whom really are serious gaming fans, with those who aren't," said Zachary Quinto, who played Spock in Abrams' movie and voices a hologram medical doctor in the game.

"I think it's great to unify these two groups and give people the opportunity to engage each other and play with each other online and have the experience of the game together."

While Quinto's character guides players through a tutorial that covers the game, the original Spock, Leonard Nimoy, narrates the online game.

"There are a lot of young people who never saw 'Star Trek' before who went to see this movie who are now interested in 'Star Trek,'" said Nimoy.

"I think there will be a number of them who will be interested in a video game and a number of them who will be going back to the original episodes to take a look to see what the roots of all this is all about."

According to Michael Pachter, videogame analyst for Wedbush Securities, "Star Trek Online" should attract one million paying subscribers initially but he forecast this number could double.

"I've been so excited to see how younger generations have taken to the 'Star Trek' brand following the movie reboot," said Rod Roddenberry, CEO of Roddenberry Productions.

"'Star Trek' has always been about exploring the future of technology, so it's fitting that the next generations of games would live in the online space."

For its part, Cryptic Studios, which previously created comic book MMO games "City of Heroes" and "Champions Online," has been sculpting a huge universe set in 2409 based on the original "Star Trek" history but the story takes place well after the original crew has passed away.

To satisfy both classic and new fans, the game's character customization includes uniforms from the original show and films as well as the reboot, while the starships and weapons have been upgraded and borrow heavily from Abrams' recent movie.

"We have two distinct gameplay types, including the away team adventures on the ground, which is more fast-paced action involving fights with aliens, and there's the more strategic and tactical space combat with the starships," explained Andy Velasquez, producer of "Star Trek Online" at Cryptic Studios.

With the social emphasis of the MMO game genre, "Star Trek Online" has been designed to allow players to congregate in locations like Earth Space Dock to trade goods, meet up for a new mission, and even dance at the night club.

Velasquez said away team missions have been designed for up to five players to beam down for an adventure together on any of the game's planets.

The game includes a Genesis engine which allows stories to be created each time a group of players beam down to a planet surface for a new mission. As many as 20 players can join up as captains of starships to fight against enemies like the Borg and the Klingons in large-scale ship combat.

While Trekkers will have to wait until June 29, 2012, for "Star Trek II" to hit the big screen, Cryptic Studios is already adding new content to the online game so that fans can live long and prosper in a never-ending virtual Trek universe.

Are Apple and Nintendo Headed for Mortal Combat?

Will the sequel to Nintendo's DS handheld video game system include a tilt sensor to one-up Apple's iPhone? Signs point to yes, says an inside source at a developer who claims he's laid hands on one of Nintendo's super-secret 'DS2' development kits, and that he's extremely impressed.

According to CVG, an insider at Nintendo affiliate The Pokemon Company (responsible for the eponymous franchise, including the games, films, and TV shows) had a chance to fiddle with prototype DS2 hardware.

His preliminary verdict? "Genuinely the best thing [he's]...ever worked with."

"I can tell you that it's got a 'tilt' function that's not dissimilar to iPhone, but does a lot more," he said, though he cautioned that Nintendo told him it was still early days for the product.

The iPhone uses a basic accelerometer that's capable of tilt-sensing but little else. Could Nintendo's DS2 add more sophisticated stuff like shock and vibration detection? Pedometer-like capabilities for sport-related activities? Image stability to let you snap crisper pictures? Gesture or tap recognition through light clothing to let you perform simple tasks like switch out music? Process multiple axes (like Sony's SIXAXIS gamepad) for higher-fidelity controls in racing or flying games? Employ dual accelerometers--one in each screen--that let the screens themselves somehow interact in new ways?

Moreover, doesn't this sort of technology place Apple and Nintendo on a collision course? Nintendo's fond of reminding us it makes devices to play games expressly, while Apple's quick to bracket its technology in terms of "lifestyle solutions," where games are just one of several blips on the company's mobile radar.

But as motion-sensing and touch-based functionality in these devices overlaps and the desire for device consolidation grows, locking horns seems more like a "when" than an "if." Whether Nintendo steps up with iPhone-like functionality or Apple simply rebrands its iPhone and iPod Touch as 'DS-killers' and markets to a younger demographic, I think we're on the verge of a showdown instigated by natural market convergence.

As for Nintendo's so-called 'DS2' with tilt sensor and Nvidia Tegra graphics chip, don't look for a GDC 2010 reveal, or even an announcement by E3 this summer. Not if whatever developers are presently fiddling with is just a first-phase prototype.

Besides, Nintendo's in no hurry to retire its economically bulletproof DS. Apple's upcoming iPhone refresh probably won't add any groundbreaking new game-related features, and the iPhone's worldwide install base remains a fraction of the Nintendo DS's 125 million-plus.

Nintendo Wins Australia Payout over Game-Copying Device

Gaming giant Nintendo said Friday it had won 556,500 US dollars' compensation from an Australian firm for selling illegal game-copying devices.

Nintendo said it won a Federal Court case against online console and accessory seller GadgetGear over the gadgets, known as R4 cards, which pirate games for its handheld DS system.

"GadgetGear and its directors have now acknowledged that game copying devices infringe both Nintendo's copyright and Nintendo's trademarks and that they are illegal circumvention devices," the Japanese company said.

"As a result, GadgetGear and the directors have agreed to permanently refrain from importing, offering for sale and/or selling game copier devices."

GadgetGear and directors Patrick and James Li were ordered to pay Nintendo 620,000 Australian dollars (556,500 US dollars) in damages and hand over all its stock of copiers for destruction.

Nintendo said it was mulling further action against other Australian sellers of pirating gadgets, and would use "all means available to it under the law".

This month, an Australian man agreed to pay Nintendo 1.3 million US dollars in an out-of-court settlement after illegally uploading New Super Mario Bros. to the Internet six days before its global release.

Old Nintendo Sells for $13,000

An eBay user thought she was putting an everyday Nintendo system up for auction but may not have expected a final selling price of thousands.

Everyday folk discovering colossally valuable collectors' items amid everyday junk has been the lifeblood of antiques shows for years, but it's not every day you see a real-life gold-in-the-attic tale play out on eBay.

The woman, from the US, placed the 1980s Nintendo Entertainment System (together with five games) up on the popular auction site.

Less than an hour after the first bid, the price was over $US6000.

When the auction closed, the final selling price topped $US13,105.

The value was not in the console itself but one of the games bundled with it. The deeply obscure 1987 release called Stadium Events, a highly sought-after collectors' item.

However, it was not the game itself that was worth the bulk of the money, it was the original cardboard box, which collectors value at a breathtaking $US10,000.

Fewer than 10 complete copies of the game are thought to exist and retro gaming aficionados consider it one of the hardest-to-find Nintendo games ever made.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Hackers Attacked Google from China Schools

The Internet attacks that may end up driving Google Inc. out of China originated from two prominent schools in the country, according to a story published late Thursday.

The New York Times reported security investigators have traced the hacking to computers at Shanghai Jiaotong University and Lanxiang Vocational School in China. The newspaper attributed the information to unnamed people involved in the investigation.

Google didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

The company revealed on Jan. 12 that digital thieves had stolen some of its computer code and tried to break into the accounts of human rights activists opposed to China's policies. The sophisticated theft also targeted the computers of more than 30 other companies, according to security experts. A security weakness in Microsoft Corp.'s Internet Explorer Web browser is believed to have created an opening for the hackers.

The digital assault was serious enough to prompt Google to confront China's government about censorship rules that weed out politically and culturally sensitive topics from search results in the country. Google says it's prepared to shut down its China-based search engine and possibly shut down all of its offices in the country unless the ruling party loosens its restrictions on free speech.

Google and the government are still discussing a possible compromise.

The threat to leave China triggered speculation that Google suspected the country's government might have been involved in the computer attacks. Google has only said it believes the attack originated from within China.

China's government has denied any involvement while continuing to insist publicly that Google must obey its restrictions against showing links deemed to be subversive or pornographic.

The National Security Agency and other specialists in digital forensics have been trying to identify the source of the attacks against Google and the other companies for weeks. The inquiry led to computers at the two schools, with some evidence suggesting the attacks may have started 10 months ago, the Times reported.

Jiaotong University boasts one of China's top computer science programs, according to the Times' story. Lanxiang is a large vocational school that trains some computer scientists for the Chinese military, the Times said.

Spokesmen for the two schools told the Times that they hadn't heard U.S. investigators had implicated them in the attacks.

Former US Officials in Cyberattack Simulation

Former top US intelligence officials will become cyberwarriors on Tuesday in a simulation of how the US government would respond to a massive cyberattack on the United States.

"The scenario itself is secret," said Eileen McMenamin, vice president of communications for the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), which is hosting the event dubbed "Cyber ShockWave."

"The participants don't even know what it is," McMenamin told AFP. "None of them know what's going to transpire."

For Cyber ShockWave, a room at the Mandarin Hotel here is being transformed into the White House Situation Room, where the president and his top advisers typically meet to address national emergencies.

"We'll have all of these different screens with different information coming in," McMenamin said. "The members of the cabinet are going to have to react in real time as they would in real life."

"We'll see how they coordinate with the private sector as well," she said, as they sift through intelligence and news reports to mount a response to the "large-scale cyber crisis" and provide advise to the chief executive.

The Cyber ShockWave simulation has been drawn up by Michael Hayden, a former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and members of the BPC's National Security Preparedness Group.

Former president George W. Bush's Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff will play the role of National Security Advisor to the president while former Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte will be Secretary of State.

Fran Townsend, George W. Bush's Homeland Security advisor, will be promoted to Homeland Security secretary while former deputy CIA director John McLaughlin will be bumped up to Director of National Intelligence.

Joe Lockhart, former president Bill Clinton's press secretary, will serve as a counselor to the president.

Other participants include retired general Charles Wald, the former deputy

commander of US European Command, who will be Secretary of Defense, and former deputy attorney general Jamie Gorelick who will move up to Attorney General.

"It's a great group of people," McMenamin said. "They'll be playing different roles than they actually played in government."

She said Cyber ShockWave, which will be open to the media and will be filmed and broadcast by the CNN television news network at a later date, was intended to "educate the public about our vulnerabilities" to cyberattack.

"It's a problem that every person with a laptop and a cellphone should worry about," she said.

"Google and China are on the front pages of the papers," McMenamin noted in a reference to a recent wave of cyberattacks on US companies which the Internet giant said originated in China.

"Things like this are happening like this every day," she said. "People really need to be aware of what's going on."

Cyber ShockWave, which will last for three hours, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm on Tuesday, is being sponsored by General Dynamics Advanced Information Systems, SMobile Systems, Southern Co., Georgetown University and PayPal.

Three years ago, the BPC and Securing America's Future Energy (SAFE) staged another simulation, "Oil ShockWave," which examined US dependence on foreign oil as a national security threat.

The non-profit BPC was founded in 2007 by four former Senate Majority leaders - Democrats George Mitchell and Tom Daschle and Republicans Howard Baker and Bob Dole.

Botnets Found in Government and Business Systems

A new Zeus botnet has been discovered affecting 75,000 systems in 2,500 organizations around the world. Both corporate and government networks have become victims of the severe cyberattack dubbed the Kneber attack, named after the username linked with the attack.

The attack was first discovered in January while a security analyst at Hernon, Va.-based NetWitness was installing a monitoring system for a client. In investigating the discovery, the company found Kneber had compromised 68,000 corporate log-ins; access to various e-mail systems, including Yahoo and Hotmail; access to online banking sites; and access to social-networking sites, including Facebook. All of this was done in a four-week period.

Kneber has been identified as a botnet, where compromised computers run software remotely.

"Systems compromised by this botnet provide the attackers not only user credentials and confidential information, but remote access inside the compromised networks," said Amit Yoran, CEO of NetWitness and former director of the National Cyber Security Division.

The Kneber botnet is not stopped by traditional malware protection or other intrusion-detection systems, and NetWitness analysts fear organizations will not see the damage from this attack until it has already occurred.

More than half the infected machines were also infected with a peer-to-peer botnet dubbed Waledac, a worm that is capable of collecting and forwarding password information. It's also capable of receiving commands from a remote server, including to upgrade malware components or send information from the infected computer.

Used together, the botnets have the potential to enable hackers to collaborate in what NetWitness said may be a "criminal underground."

"On a microlevel, there are new versions of Trojans and viruses that come out all the time and some gain traction while others do not," said Matthew Prince, cocreator of Project Honey Pot, a spam tracking network. "On the macrolevel it is really scary."

The Zeus line of credential-stealing viruses is like a whole new disease that has emerged in the cyber infection space, according to Prince. The bad guys are taking technology that has emerged through the Zeus virus and leveraged it into newer attacks such as Kneber.

"The revolution that has happened and the supply chain of criminal enterprises that has been built up by the Zeus virus has allowed them to do damage in a way that was not before possible," Prince said.

, "These large-scale compromises of enterprise networks have reached epidemic levels," NetWitness's Yoran said. "Cybercriminal elements like the Kneber crew quietly and diligently target and compromise thousands of government and commercial organizations across the globe."

Zeus attacks infect a victims' computer and watch for the user to log in to a particular banking site or a site which has value. In some variations it even triggered itself to open a connection. Once a connection is made, it begins transmitting credentials back to the bad guys. Once the hackers were armed with the information, they were able to log in and steal from people's bank accounts.

"What is more troublesome is these new viruses are specifically targeted to do everything they can to suck as much money out as they possibly can," Prince said. "Victims go from being relatively minor victims like someone whose credit-card information is stolen to very large attacks targeting business institutions and stealing in the hundreds of thousands of dollars."

So how are individual computer users, small business owners, and large companies such as Juniper Networks and Merck to prevent becoming victims?

The standard advice still applies, according to experts. Individuals and companies need to keep their systems updated with antivirus protection, and users are discouraged from clicking on links from strangers.

Individual accounts are typically covered by a bank's insurance. But small and large businesses need to be sure their financial institution will cover any losses.

"The scarier side is for businesses where most of its banks are not insured against loss coming from these attacks because there is a waiver

of liability if the business network becomes infected," Prince said. "There are cases of a half-million dollars walking out the door through these attacks and banks say 'Sorry, not our problem.'"

Experts Highlight Growing Cyber-Jihad Threat

An Al-Qaeda cyber-offensive is a real and growing threat, even though Osama bin Laden's shadowy group has yet to show a true capability, experts said.

"A co-ordinated cyber-attack made in Al-Qaeda? This has not happened yet, but it is not just fantasy," Dominique Thomas, a specialist in Islamic networks at Paris's School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences, told AFP.

"We can envisage it: they have the brains, and the advantage is they don't have to be many to be effective", Thomas added.

Al-Qaeda has so far stuck to classic, if spectacular, attack methods - the hijackings in the September 11, 2001 attacks and machine gun and bombs.

But on Tuesday top US officials participated in the "Cyber ShockWave" exercise testing responses to a coordinated attack on the Internet, transport, telephone and electricity networks.

And this month US Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair told the US Senate "terrorist groups and their sympathisers have expressed interest in using cyber means to target the United States and its citizens".

The US defence establishment is also discussing when a cyber-attack on facilities such as the American electricity grid could be considered an act of war.

Online offensives against official websites have already been recorded, including in Saudi Arabia, and the necessary expertise is available on some forums.

"On jihadist websites there are all sorts of manuals explaining how to make an e-bomb, how to create a virus, how to use encryption techniques", Thomas said. "They are very up to date. The Saudis especially are very strong."

Among militants indicted for terrorist acts, there are more students from pure sciences such as mathematics or information technology than there are from the social sciences, according to numerous studies.

Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who is accused of trying to blow up a US bound jet on December 25 studied mechanical engineering at a top London university.

James Lewis from the Center for Strategic and International Studies who co-authored the "Security in cyberspace in the 44th presidency", said a cyber-attack was only a matter of time.

"Al-Qaeda doesn't yet have the kind of capabilities to pull off the kind of big disruptive attack that they really want," he said.

"But over the next few years, they will develop these capabilities."

"We have to expect something big to happen within a decade", he said.

Richard Hunter, a specialist in computer security based in New York and author of "World Without Secrets", stressed that "IT is the ultimate asymmetrical force."

"The power one exerts through IT is very much a function of one's intelligence and skills," he told AFP.

It was less about funding or the number of people he argued. "The ultimate resource is one clever individual. You find one of those everywhere."

"If they don't have the expertise, and we know they made that a priority, they could certainly develop it", Hunter said.

"It is well known to all working IT professionals that the technology turns over every five years. Meaning that anyone who enters at a given point can be an expert within 5 years."

Net Neutrality Debate Goes Global

With the Federal Communications Commission currently considering official rules regarding net neutrality, the issue has been a hot topic in the United States. But that interest also extends across the pond.

At a panel on networking management at Mobile World Congress here, European executives acknowledged the need for guidance on net neutrality, but said that network operators are taking a more mature approach to the issue now, and view fair network management as good business.

"As a European company, we see the variance of regulation across the industry, and - we can see that in less regulated markets, it's certainly possible to bring a pretty heavy hammer to various protocols and behaviors which the operator does not like," said Joe Hogan, chief technology officer for Dublin-based Openet, which provides event processing and transaction management solutions. "But we do see a more mature perspective being taken by the operators in that it's less to do with targeting the particular network traffic and locking various protocols and more to do with focusing on the business perspective."

Net neutrality is the theory that everyone should have equal access to the Internet. For example, a major retailer should not be able to pay their Internet service provider for the right to have their Web site load faster than a mom-and-pop online store. Most are in agreement that the theory is a good one - the disagreement is over whether the government should step in and regulate it or if the industry should self-regulate.

Hogan said as the industry moves toward a better understanding of accurate network management and as the FCC provides clearer guidance, the two will likely meet in the middle. He speculated that businesses might respond to some sort of incentive program - an Energy Star program for network management of sorts. Companies can use it as a marketing

tool ("Gold star in network management for 5 years running!"), and "extract more value" from their customers, Hogan said.

Thierry Maupilø, head of strategy and business development for mobile Internet technology at Cisco Systems, said "there is no doubt" that this is an issue which network operators will have to address.

One of the more pressing issues, he said, is availability of spectrum.

"I think we have to recognize on one side that no matter what, if you're in a wireless connectivity environment, this is going to a limited resource at some time," he said. "We have not yet launched LTE and the number one item that operators are talking about is, 'I need spectrum. I need more spectrum.'"

Regardless of your approach, "you cannot accept a model where you have to discriminate against one subscriber versus another," Maupilø said.

A recent study from Cisco found that by 2014, about 60 percent of traffic on wireless networks will be video. "You can imagine what kind of dynamic that will create," he said. "It's early days. Whatever is the outcome, those rules will need to be defined and clear, and then people are going to act accordingly."

Susie Kim Riley, founder and chief technology officer of Massachusetts-based Camiant, said she met with FCC Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker recently, and found that "one of the big things that [the FCC is] after is this aspect of transparency and openness and making sure that when you sell a service to a subscriber that they understand service that is being sold."

"The subscriber doesn't care if service is over an IP network or dedicated circuit-based network. They just expect the quality to be good," Riley said. "And so from that perspective, the regulators understand that you do have to have policy on the network for some of these services."

FCC Wants High-Speed Internet for the Masses

The chairman of the Federal Communications Commission has shared some details about the upcoming National Broadband Plan that will be sent to Congress in March, including plans to bring 100 M bps (bits per second) high-speed internet service to 100 million homes across the United States.

In a speech at the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) Conference on Tuesday, Chairman Julius Genachowski likened broadband to electricity - a "general purpose technology" that will enable a wide array of innovations and yield "hundreds of thousands of new jobs." According to Genachowski, wider access to high-speed internet will mean better access to education and resources for children in rural and urban areas, growth for small businesses, and improved healthcare.

Genachowski did not go into details about how the FCC planned on implementing its "100 Squared" plan, but rather pointed to Google's recent announcement of plans to build a 1 GB bps fiber network that will bring ultra high-speed broadband internet (at speeds "more than 100 times faster than what most Americans have access to today") to between 50,000

and 500,000 Americans. Genachowski mentioned that more innovators such as Google are needed to drive competition "to invent the future," and that the ultimate goal should "stretch beyond 100 megabits."

Genachowski pointed out that there is currently a broadband adoption rate of "roughly 65 percent of U.S. households, compared with 88 percent adoption in Singapore, and 95 percent adoption in South Korea."

A recent study released by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) confirms that in October 2009, approximately 63.5 percent of U.S.households have high-speed broadband internet access - a 25 percent increase from two years ago in October 2007, when just 50.8 percent of U.S. households reported high-speed broadband internet access. The United States is currently ranked twentieth in household broadband percentages.

The "100 Squared" plan is not the only thing we can expect in the upcoming broadband plan - other recommendations will include improvement of the E-Rate program (a program designed to bring telecommunications and internet access to schools and libraries), lowering the cost of broadband (both wired and wireless) through use of government rights of way and conduits, and modernization of the FCC's rural telemedicine program (by connecting thousands of clinics).

With an internet speed of 100M bps, it would take approximately 80 seconds to transfer a 1GB file - much faster than the 35 minutes it takes to transfer that file over the current average U.S. connection speed of 3.9M bps.

The FCC's "100M bps for 100 million homes" sounds promising, but Genachowski's speech leaves room for many questions. The FCC has given no details on how they expect to implement such a lofty plan, on how it will be made affordable to the potential 100 million (considering there is a strong suggestion that one of the factors holding people back from broadband is price), and on whether the 100 million will actually put such fast internet to use.

Privacy Group Files FTC Complaint on Google Buzz

A privacy watchdog group complained to federal regulators on Tuesday about Google's new Buzz social networking service, saying it violates federal consumer protection law.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center filed its complaint with the Federal Trade Commission just days after Google Inc. altered the service to address mounting privacy concerns.

Since launching Google Buzz as part of Gmail a week ago, the search company has come under fire for automatically creating public circles of friends for users based on their most frequent Gmail contacts. Over the weekend, Google altered the service to merely suggest contacts for its users' social networks.

Despite the changes, EPIC argues that privacy violations remain because Google automatically signs up Gmail users for Buzz, rather than waiting for them to do so themselves, or "opt in" for the service. EPIC wants the FTC to require Google to make Buzz a "fully opt-in" service. It also

wants the company barred from using Gmail address book contacts to compile social networking lists.

"This is a significant breach of consumers' expectations of privacy," EPIC Executive Director Marc Rotenberg said in a statement. "Google should not be allowed to push users' personal information into a social network they never requested."

But Google insists that it gives users control because, even though it adds a "Buzz" link to all Gmail accounts, users must click on the link and agree to activate the service. Google also gives users the option to disable Buzz.

In response to the EPIC complaint, Google said it has already made some changes to Buzz based on user feedback and has "more improvements in the works."

"We look forward to hearing more suggestions and will continue to improve the Buzz experience with user transparency and control top of mind," the company said.

Microsoft To Pull Facebook, MySpace into Outlook

Microsoft Corp. is taking another step toward turning Outlook, its desktop e-mail program, into a hub for information from popular social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace.

Microsoft's "beta" test version of the Outlook Social Connector, an add-on for Outlook, was first discussed last November. When a user clicks to read an e-mail message, a new pane on the main e-mail reading screen fills with the sender's most recent social-networking activities. That could be that sender's new Facebook status update or a newly added professional contact on the business networking site LinkedIn.

On Wednesday, Microsoft updated the Social Connector software, and LinkedIn released the first outside plug-in for the feature.

Microsoft has a mixed record when it comes to Web trends. The company's free Hotmail and Windows Live Messenger programs are widely used, but its Windows Live blog and social network didn't pick up much steam in the face of competition from Facebook. In this case, a small startup called Xobni has already built an Outlook add-on that combines inbox search with content from Facebook, LinkedIn and others.

Microsoft's software also treats Outlook itself as a social network. If the e-mail sender and recipient are jointly working on a document stored on a company's Sharepoint server, both will see updates if one logs on to make edits.

For now, the software doesn't let people use Outlook to push information back up to LinkedIn, Facebook or other sites.

People using Office 2003, 2007 and beta versions of Office 2010 can download the updated Outlook Social Connector beta from Microsoft and then visit LinkedIn for the add-on software.

Microsoft said the Facebook and MySpace plug-ins will be ready for

download by the time Office 2010 goes on sale in June.

Will Kennedy, a corporate vice president for the Office group, said some of Microsoft's business customers have expressed concern that employees will become less productive if they have all this extra information at their fingertips.

But Kennedy sees business-friendly uses for the Social Connector. He thinks it could speed up processes that require approval from a string of people, because each person in that chain could see when it's time for him or her to weigh in.

"We don't want this to sort of be the next great time waster in the workplace," he said.

Pennsylvania School Used Webcams To Spy on Students

A suburban Philadelphia school district used the webcams in school-issued laptops to spy on students at home, potentially catching them and their families in compromising situations, a family claims in a federal lawsuit.

Lower Merion School District officials said the laptops "contain a security feature intended to track lost, stolen and missing laptops," and that the feature was deactivated Thursday. Angry students had already responded by putting tape on their laptop cameras and microphones.

Sophomore Tom Halpern described students as "pretty disgusted," and noted that his class recently read "1984," the George Orwell classic that coined the term "Big Brother."

"This is just bogus," said Halpern, 15, of Wynnewood, as he left Harriton High School on Thursday with his taped-up computer. "I just think it's really despicable that they have the ability to just watch me all the time."

The school district can activate the webcams without students' knowledge or permission, the suit said. Plaintiffs Michael and Holly Robbins suspect the cameras captured students and family members as they undressed and in other embarrassing situations, according to the suit.

Such actions would amount to potentially illegal electronic wiretapping, said Witold J. Walczak, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, which is not involved in the case.

"School officials cannot, any more than police, enter into the home either electronically or physically without an invitation or a warrant," Walczak said.

A school district statement released late Thursday said the tracking feature would not be reactivated "without express written notification to all students and families."

"We can categorically state that we are and have always been committed to protecting the privacy of our students," said the spokesman, Doug Young.

The affluent district prides itself on its technology initiatives, which include giving Apple laptops to each of the approximately 2,300 students

at its two high schools.

"It is no accident that we arrived ahead of the curve; in Lower Merion, our responsibility is to lead," Superintendent Christopher W. McGinley wrote on the district Web site. McGinley did not immediately return messages left Thursday by The Associated Press.

The Robbinses said they learned of the alleged webcam images when Lindy Matsko, an assistant principal at Harriton High School, told their son Blake that school officials thought he had engaged in improper behavior at home. The behavior was not specified in the suit.

"(Matsko) cited as evidence a photograph from the webcam embedded in minor plaintiff's personal laptop issued by the school district," the suit states. The behavior was not specified in the suit, which did not make clear whether the family had seen any photographs captured by school officials.

Matsko later confirmed to Michael Robbins that the school had the ability to activate the webcams remotely, according to the suit, which was filed Tuesday and which seeks class-action status.

The Robbinses declined to speak with an Associated Press reporter at their home Thursday. Their lawyer, Mark S. Haltzman, did not return messages.

The U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed the privacy of the home when it ruled in 2001 that police could not, without a warrant, use thermal imaging equipment outside a home to see if heat lamps were being used inside to grow marijuana. Technology or no, Supreme Court precedents draw "a firm line at the entrance to the house," Justice Antonin Scalia wrote, quoting an earlier case.

"This isn't just them spying on the kids, this is them intruding on the parents' home. Who knows what they are seeing?" Walczak said. "The courts for 80 years have said there's no greater sanctuary than a person's own home."

The lawsuit's allegations raise new concerns about school-issued laptops, said an Electronic Freedom Foundation lawyer.

"I've never heard of anything this egregious," said Kevin Bankston, a senior staff attorney at the San Francisco-based group. "Nobody would have imagined that schools would peer into students private homes and even bedrooms without any kind of justification.

Students like Halpern say they mostly keep their computers in their bedrooms - and rarely turn them off.

"School ends at the end of the school property, so they shouldn't really be in our business at home," Halpern said.

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